



The Reverend and Mrs. Andrew McGaffin leave the church to visit part of the parish, an 18,000-square-mile Navaho reservation.

GOD BI-ZAD

A Presbyterian minister and his wife bring "God's Word" to Navaholand

By R. WILSON BROWN

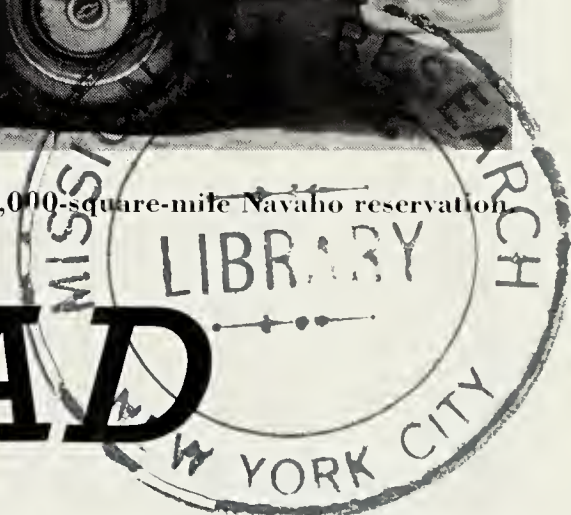
SOME PEOPLE think of home missions as neighborhood houses in big cities, nice little white churches in friendly little towns, or the counterpart of the one-room schoolhouse under the oaks in the farmlands. How many, I wonder, know that right here in the United States is a land of 18,000 square miles where there are 50,000 people—the great majority of whom cannot speak, read, or write the English language—where they live in the same manner as did their ancestors a century ago; where home is a mud hut called a hogan; where superstitions are the rule and the medicine man treats a stomach-ache by dancing and waving red feathers. Going into the Navaho Reservation in northeast Arizona today is just like step-

ping back into the primitive life of America's early days.

If you are traveling in the West and would like a glimpse of yesteryear and see an example of an unusual mission at work, take Highway 89, which runs alongside the Grand Canyon, to Cameron, Arizona; go thirteen more miles north, then turn to the right on a little dirt road for ninety-nine miles and you'll land in Kayenta—provided you don't get stuck in the sand. Once there, ask for the Reverend and Mrs. Andrew McGaffin to show you around. You'll be amazed at what you will learn.

**MISSIONARY
BIOGRAPHY**
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Mr. McGaffin is moderator of the Synod of Arizona. But up at Kayenta no one knows about synods and organizations. They only know that Mr. McGaffin is the man who reads *God Bi-zad* (God's Word) in the little church up from Bennett Hyde's trading post, and that Mrs. McGaffin is the lady who helps them when they have an "empty tube." (Almost every day someone comes and complains of an "empty tube." They have slaughtered many sheep for food and know that the animal dies when its big aorta blood artery is drained. So the Indian figures that his aorta or "big tube" becomes empty and thus causes his illness.) Mrs. McGaffin happens to be a registered nurse, although the red-skinned people probably haven't the slightest idea what that means.



TO UNDERSTAND Kayenta and the work of the mission there, you must know certain facts. Kayenta consists of a trading post, an Indian school, a small motel with cafe, a handful of houses—and that's all. Total white population is ten. It's eighty-six miles to the nearest doctor and hospital—at Tuba City. It's 177 miles to the nearest railroad—at Flagstaff. It's 260 miles to the county seat—Holbrook. Eggs come from Blanding, Utah, 110 miles away. Mail comes only twice a week. The only things modern are electricity—supplied by the trader's own generator; a radio sending set—also operated by the trader; and a telephone in the trading post. The road is little more than a graded sand trail. Since everything must be trucked in the 177 miles from Flagstaff, prices are high. A half dollar won't buy a can of peaches, a favorite food with the Navaho. The Indian school is for Indians only. The McGaffins must send their son to Wasatch Academy, the Presbyterian boarding school at Mt. Pleasant, Utah.

Operating a mission

Operating a mission here is more than just preaching. Here are a few of the problems laid at the McGaffins' door:

Little four-year-old Kee Boone was bit-

ten on the toe by a rattler. His folks gave him a poultice of soapweed and stinkbugs. When that didn't work, they called upon the McGaffins. He was rushed to the hospital and has recovered.

A teacher at Dennehotso developed blood poisoning. That settlement is 102 miles from the Tuba City hospital, and he couldn't stand the trip. So Mrs. McGaffin went to Dennehotso and stayed, treating the patient with penicillin. The fact that she isn't a doctor didn't matter. This was an emergency, and she long ago learned that she must often act on her own.

While Mr. McGaffin has conducted four funerals for whites and buried twelve Indians, the matter of handling final rites here is not a simple one. The Navaho is superstitious. If one dies in his mud hogan, an opening is cut in the north side to permit the escape of the spirit, and the hogan is abandoned. Anyone who touches the body must go away in solitude for four days of fasting until he is purified. If either Mr. or Mrs. McGaffin has anything to do with the body, they, too, would be expected to hide away and fast until they were purified. If a body should be brought into the church for a funeral service, the big majority of Indians would never again enter that church.

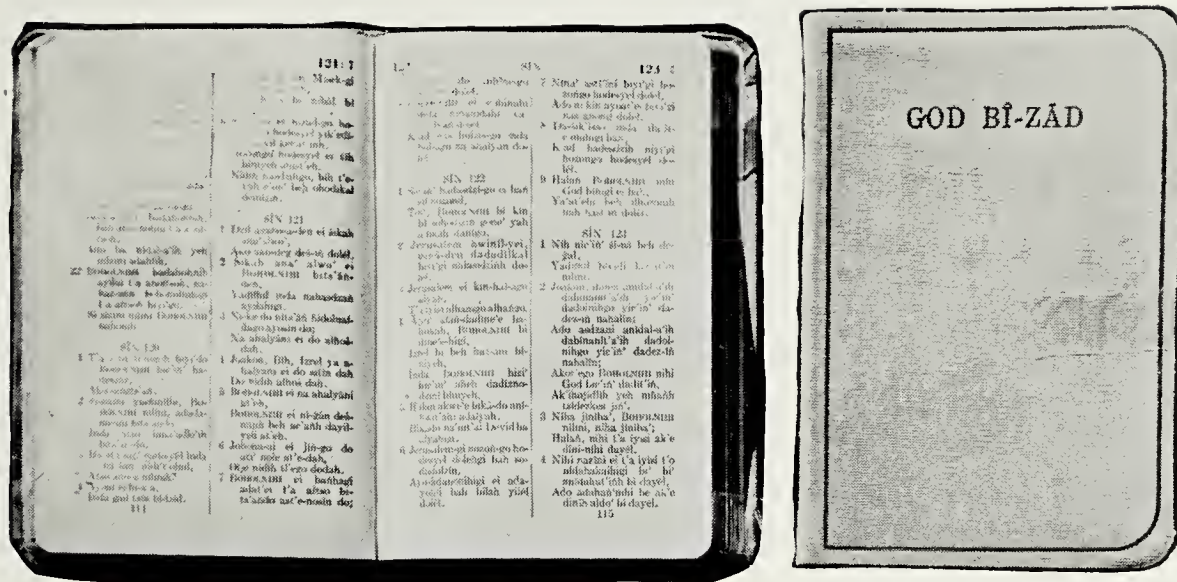
Marriage, too, is often rather unortho-

dox. The Navaho has his choice of three types of marriage. There's the simple way—the man and woman simply decide to live together and that's that. Or they can have an Indian ceremony in which there is a great celebration. Or they can come to Mr. McGaffin and have a Christian ceremony. In the last case, they must get a license, which Mr. McGaffin is authorized by county authorities to issue; and if the marriage doesn't work, they have to go through the white man's divorce court to have it put aside, something the other two methods do not require. The fact that there have been over fifty Christian marriages in the past ten years indicates that the work of the mission is having a real influence upon the thinking of these primitive, superstitious people.

When Mr. McGaffin reads from *God Bi-zad* he is reading from a Bible in the Navaho language, a Bible issued by the American Bible Society and "Presented to the National Missions Station of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Kayenta, Arizona, in memory of Katherine Fulton Hamilton, First and Central Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Del." And when they sing, they have two hymnals—*Vesper Chimes* and *New World Edition Gospel Hymns in Navajo*—both in the Navaho language.



Part of the congregation at Kayenta. As most of town's white population often attends, sermons are in English and Navaho.



Bible (God Bi-zad) and hymnal

John Claw interprets

The Navaho language is a complicated one. So when Mr. McGaffin preaches, John Claw stands beside him and interprets. That's John's full-time job for which he gets \$1,300 a year and a house in which he lives with his wife Lulu, who teaches in the Sunday school, and his five children. He has been on the job for twelve years, starting when there was no church and the missionary just traveled around over the reservation. He interprets, paragraph by paragraph, which of course makes even a short sermon a long one. If he isn't sure of the correct interpretation, he doesn't hesitate to in-

terrupt the minister to interject a question or two.

John's influence has been widespread throughout the reservation. This year when the Navahos went to the polls to elect their tribal council they elected John as their council vice president, their second highest office.

John and Lulu got together when both worked in a hospital operated on the reservation for the Indians by the federal Public Health Service. While John was in the Marines during World War II, Mr. McGaffin tried to get them to marry or to register their common law marriage. But government red tape being what it is,

there were complications. It wasn't until John came back to Kayenta that he and Lulu had a Christian ceremony, with a license issued by Mr. McGaffin and a church wedding with a few of their children as witnesses.

It's an inspiration to walk into the little frame church built by Indian labor. First you'll see an honor roll of boys who went to war—names like Harry Salt, Joe Rock, Walter Peaches, John Claw, and Oscar Singer. Beside the names of Denver Smith, Harry Tsosie and Paul Begay are gold stars. *God Bi-zad* is on the pulpit. The day I was there the little blackboards announced:

Attendance today	36
Attendance last Sunday.....	42
Offering today	\$3.53
Offering last Sunday.....	\$3.26

Subject lesson for today: "Jno. 15:5—I am the vine, ye are the branches: . . . for without me ye can do nothing."

Furnishings

There's a coal- and wood-burning pot-bellied stove, an American flag, a birthday offering container, a piano and wooden benches. The walls are beaver-board. There are six windows. And from the ceiling hang plain bulbs lighted from the trader's little gasoline-operated generator. The lights burn only when the generator is running.



Eighty-six miles from the nearest doctor, 177 miles from any railroad, stands Kayenta. This picture shows the entire town.

Outside there is red sand everywhere, and when the wind blows sand penetrates into places one had been sure were tight and sandproof. There are a couple of little trees, a flag pole and white rock steps. There is something inspiring in the desert bareness of the surroundings. Nearby is a log hogan with earthen floor and no furniture, where a traveling Indian can have shelter for the night. Then there are the two little houses, the one in which the McGaffins live and the one where John and Lulu and their five children live.

It all sounds like so little, but the area which the mission serves (District 8) consists of one-and-a-half-million acres. Missionary McGaffin must travel thirty miles in each direction to cover his territory. And travel here is in itself a problem. A shovel, water, and food are standard equipment for tackling the so-called roads. Break down and you might have to sit for days before a car passes or else you get out and walk and walk.

Heavy schedule

At Kayenta there is church school each Sunday morning at ten o'clock. Worship services are an hour later. There's a study class each Tuesday from three to four o'clock. At Dennehotso, thirty miles east, the McGaffins conduct Sunday school at 2:30 o'clock Sunday afternoons and a religious education class on Wednesday afternoons, both in the schoolhouse. The rest of the time they travel about their one-and-a-half-million acre churchyard to talk to the Indians about God, to take care of the sick, to comfort the bereaved, and to help them with their problems. In 1946 helping with problems meant going to Washington to appeal to Congress for \$30,000 to open an abandoned government hospital at Kayenta. Congress wasn't interested. They then must make a lot of trips over the eighty-six miles to Tuba City to take the injured and sick to the government hospital. Mrs. McGaffin is kept busy administering first aid and issuing aspirin, liniment, and cough medicine; and Mr. McGaffin is a deputy county clerk for the purpose of issuing marriage licenses. Just to keep him busy, Uncle Sam also has appointed him to keep and report the official weather record. Incidentally, temperatures range from two degrees below zero to 102 above, and rainfall averages only 9.34 inches per year.

Kayenta Christmas

Christmas is a big event in Kayenta because of the mission. Days in advance Indians come from all over the reservation and set up camps. Then on Christmas day there are church services followed



Sermons, in English, are interpreted into Navaho.

by a real banquet. Traders of the reservation furnish beans, mutton, potatoes, bread, and coffee. The Indians prepare it. And the McGaffins manage the hard way to have a gift for everyone. Another big event is in the Fall when there is a three-day camp meeting. This attracts more than 200 and they, too, get two free meals a day. It takes forty dollars to feed 200, which—in the opinion of this writer, who himself lives in the desert and knows the high cost of food that must be trucked in from someplace else—is somewhat of a miracle.

The mission, operated by the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., is a special project of the Old Stone Church in Cleveland, Ohio; the First Church of Enid, Okla.; the North Church of Binghamton, N. Y. Other churches give support from time to time. Missionary work here started around 1922 by itinerant workers. The McGaffins began their ministry here in 1940.

It is a long process at terrific odds, but it's bringing results of which every Christian can be justly proud.

Reprinted from *Presbyterian Life*, September 29, 1951

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156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

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